

SPEAK UP

Here's how these Meridian residents answered the question, "How do you think the war will change life in the United States?"

"I think people will appreciate their country more and pay attention to what is happening around them."
Brittany Lewis, 15

"I think the war, already, has made a huge impact in the United States. People are really recognizing and showing respect for the brave soldiers. I think the war has brought us closer together."
Katelyn Gibson, 15

"I think it already changed the United States. People are ready for loved ones to come home and are tired of war. Through all the war, little has been done for Iraq. People are not sure what kind of country they would like to be."
Courtney Roberts, 15

"I think things will be worse because everything that has happened, and is happening, is talked about in the Bible."
Wydesra Landrum, 60

"I think the war has brought a lot of people together, and people appreciate the Guardsmen even more now."
Erin Johnson, 16

"I hope that because of our involvement in the war, life will not change in our country. We are free because we fought for our freedom. I feel that it is necessary to maintain our freedom."
Monica Loden, 31

KiAndrea Moss compiled this Speak Up question. She is a sophomore at Southeast Lauderdale High School. She lives in Kewanee with her parents, Kaisha and Michael Moss. The family attends Springhill Missionary Baptist Church. KiAndrea enjoys watching television, talking on the telephone, shopping and taking care of children. After graduation, she hopes to become a physical therapist.

'Voice of Democracy' winner ...

A tradition of military determination

Heather Blackwell attends Newton County High School. She is the daughter of Thomas Blackwell and the late Cherry Blackwell. Heather is a member of the Beta Club, the Model United Nations Club, the annual staff, the color guard and the concert band. She is vice-president of the Beta Club and a member of the National Honor Society. She was an award winner in the "Voice of Democracy" essay contest sponsored by the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Here's her essay.

By Heather Blackwell
special to The Star

The courageousness of veterans who went into battle for our great nation helps to inspire today's youth. They endured conditions that are beyond comprehension for many of us.

Imagine, after being knocked out by the blast of a bomb, waking up in a makeshift hospital. You look around but can't see clearly. As you reach up to touch your face, you realize you can't see because your eye isn't in its socket. You feel it lying on your cheek. At that instant, the reality hits you, you're at war.

You begin to ask yourself, "Is this a friendly or enemy camp?" You muster every ounce of strength you have left in your body and prepare to run for your life.

This sounds like something that would only happen in a movie, doesn't it? However, it is the true story of my grandfather. After this incident at the Battle of St. Louis during World War II, the Army offered to send him home. His reply was, "I haven't finished what I came to do."

It was such men from small towns such as this one that made the difference, and these were the things they endured and triumphed over. They are our veterans.

After we were attacked on Sept. 11, 2001, our nation began to question its security. If people could invade us so easily, we begin to wonder what is there to stop them from coming into schools and workplaces, and killing more innocent people?

For this reason, we must celebrate our veterans' service.

The gift of tomorrow

Acts of courage that they performed give us hope for a better tomorrow. For what they accomplished in the past, they gave us the gift of tomorrow. The U.S. has been through many wars whose goals were to try and preserve democracy and protect other nations — to let all people have freedom. For this reason, we must celebrate our veterans' service.

In the words of Winston Churchill: "The Americans took but little when they emigrated except what they had in their souls. They came through wilderness; they became a refuge for the oppressed from every land and climate."

Our veterans fought for what they

believed to be the just cause. However, they may not have always had the support of the American people behind them that they deserved. Edmund Burke said, "All that is necessary for evil to succeed is for good men to do nothing."

In the past, evil struck the world many times. On Dec. 7, 1941, the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor and took 2,388 lives. The U.S. quickly retaliated, and our veterans went to war. They struggled to prevent evil from succeeding.

The day the towers fell

Recently, we were attacked once again on our own soil, and many of our servicemen set out to protect our nation and the lives of all the people in it, as well as our way of life. This began our war on terrorism.

After we were attacked on Sept. 11, 2001, our nation began to question its security. If people could invade us so easily, we begin to wonder what is there to stop them from coming into schools and workplaces, and killing more innocent people?

Our servicemen took action. When the cause arose they risked their lives to let us have a renewed sense of security that we need to live happily. For this reason, we must celebrate our veterans' service.

We must celebrate our veterans. They have worked so hard to help us keep this nation and make it what it is today. They preserved our heritage and taught us that we must strive to keep our nation strong.

So many men and women have lost their lives and gave us such a wonderful gift — the freedom to live in the U.S., "the land of the free and the home of the brave."

For this reason, we must celebrate our veterans' services.



Gulf War veterans live American dream

Kay Thomas is a public relations specialist at Meridian Community College. Like many people in Lauderdale County, she has discovered that unexpected people have military backgrounds. Here is her story about one of them, a co-worker at MCC.

By Kay Thomas
special to The Star

There are days when Stephen Dove, a security officer

at Meridian Community College, thinks about returning to military service.

"I really have considered going back for three more years," Dove said.

An alumnus of MCC, Dove garnered a world of experience by serving in both the U.S. Navy and U.S. Army. From being stationed on the USS Saipan in Norfolk, Va., to pulling duty in wartime Kuwait, to processing non-commissioned officers in Oson, South Korea, Dove has

served five years of active duty and three years of reserve.

"If you cut one side of me, I'd bleed Navy blue. If you cut the other side, I'd bleed Army green," he said.

He also found the love of his life, his wife, during his service to the country. Katrina Stubbs from Daytona Beach, Fla., was in the serving line in a Naval galley when Dove saw her.

"I cracked a joke, and she laughed, and I asked her if I could come eat with her," Dove said.

She piqued his interest. She was from the South and she was serving on the carrier sub-tender USS Yellowstone. After a first date at a Red Lobster restaurant in Norfolk, the two hit it off.

"We dated for a month and she had to go on a six-month cruise," he said.

The adage that distance makes the heart grow fonder



Steve Dove, 1996



Katrina Stubbs Dove, 1997

applied to the couple: "We continued to date after the six months." And another cliché, two ships passing in the night, also applies to the Doves. They learned later that they were both at the same base for their basics.

Dove completed his duties and when Katrina finished her tour (her work was cutting and shaping metal) the two married in Meridian's El Bethel Church. Today, the couple has five children, Nandi, Kamaria, Shani, Makeda, Dingane.

"We're living the American dream," Dove said.

Military service runs in Dove's family. He has siblings who served as yeomen, an uncle is a retired commander and his great, great uncle was a cook on a Naval ship in World War II.

Dove has never regretted joining up: "I have lifelong friends."